

Phase 1 of the Robben Island Regeneration Project involves repairing and renovating a section of Church Street, but only houses 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, and 49, as well as the Garrison Church. This includes repairing of external and internal walls, boundary walls, sills and parapets, eaves, and gutters and downpipes, among other things. Each building is to be treated differently according to the materials repaired, the historical significance of building, as well as paying heed to the surrounding environmental heritage in the area.

### **Church, Church Street**

The Garrison Church was built in 1841, at the same time as the old Parsonage, now numbered house #40. There is quite a lot of plaster damage on both the interior and exterior walls of the church, and some mould damage below some of the eaves on the interior North-facing wall.

From the view from the top of the church tower, one can see that there are gutters running along the top of both the north- and south-facing walls. There is a down pipe that appears on the South-facing wall, but on the North-facing wall, there is a plant growing where there might be a second downpipe. One might find that the mould damage on the interior north-facing wall is caused by the blockage in the north-facing down pipe, assuming there is a downpipe on that side.

The church has two fire extinguishers located on the ground floor of the church. One is located under the gallery stairs in the broom cupboard, and one is located in the vestry. It is unknown whether these fire extinguishers are still in working order.

The proposed repairs and renovations sent to Rivaaj Mahabeer by Geoffrey Jack mention repairing the Asbestos roof. However, from the view of the roof from the church tower, it is apparent that the church roof is made of tin, not asbestos, and that a different method of cleaning will have to be used.

The proposed repairs also suggest cleaning the low boundary wall with a high-pressure water jet, but because of the type of plaster used, this would damage the boundary wall further.

There is rabbit and tortoise activity around the church, with a few rabbit holes found in the church yard, as well as one live and one dead rabbit. There are aloe trees present in the church yard, which should not be disturbed, as they might well be a grave marking for an unknown person.

There are eight gravestones to the west of the church, two with worn markings, dating from the 1800s, belonging to . There are possibly other unmarked graves next to the headstones.

The church has a clock, with its face on the exterior of the east-facing wall, and the pendulums hanging inside the church tower. The clock mechanism was repaired in 2004 by an A.S. Hill, retired clockmaker. He can be contacted on 021 558 5786 or 082 746 2278. There is a large bell made in 1874, a possibly steel bell, standing on a wooden frame at the top of the church tower. The wood of the bell frame seems quite weather-damaged, and might need to be replaced.

The bell mechanism is not operational at the moment, but most of the cables and ropes for the system are still in place. It seems to use a complicated system of pulleys and strong steel cables, running down the length of the church tower and possibly usable from the ground floor by the means of pulling a rope.

There is damp damage on a lot of the plaster on the inside walls of the bell tower, which might indicate leakage from the top of the bell tower, perhaps where the trap door is attached to the roof.

There is a red leather-bound Afrikaans bible on the lectern, with the front cover inscription indicating that this bible was donated by a Marlize, Renier, and Henk de Ridder in 1987. It is not known who these people are. None of the wall plaques in the church bear the surname de Ridder, nor do the grave stones in the church yard.

### **House # 39, Church street.**

House number 39 is located between the church and the old parsonage. It has metal window frames and asbestos gutters, down pipes, and roof sheeting, which all needs to be cleaned as suggested. There is a functional water tank made out of asbestos located at the north-facing wall of the house. The boundary wall is made of stone and lime mortar, which means that one cannot clean it with a high-pressure water jet. There is some structural damage (cracks) above and surrounding the front door of the house, as well as some gutters that need replacing or repairing.

### **House #40, Church street**

House 40 is the old parsonage, and is, at the moment, mostly unused. It appears to be used as a conference room occasionally. There is an electricity box on the exterior wall next to the front door, which shows that at the time of construction, electricity was not available. The electric wiring in the house must have been added at a later stage. There is a fire hydrant located to the South-west of the house, a short distance away from the boundary wall, which may or may not be in operation.

There are two rooms inside the house which appear to have fireplaces that have been blocked up, as the interior walls stick out as if a mantle were present. However, from the view of the house from the bell tower, there are no interior chimneys visible, only one chimney on the west-facing exterior wall, which may or may not be connected to a working fireplace, either outside or in the kitchen.

There is a lot of work to be done on the interior plastering in house 40, specifically on the walls that separate the interior from the exterior. This may mean that moisture is seeping in through the walls, or that extreme temperature changes over the years have warped and weakened the walls.

The original parapet of house 40 was replaced with tin roof sheeting after it was built, perhaps due to leaking roofs or that the structure might have been unsound. Perhaps the original roofing is located underneath the tin roofing and can be restored. The tin sheeting visible from the ground has been painted red and white, and judging by past photographs, always has been. Renovators should bear in mind that this colour must either be retained during cleaning, or replaced after cleaning.

Within the boundary walls and in the back yard of house 40, are two functional asbestos water tanks, which have suffered moisture damage over the years. There is also a derelict asbestos shed

facing west, which might have been used as a garage, servants' quarters, or a tool shed. Close to it, a slightly worn brick braai place is seen.

#### **House # 49, Church Street.**

House 49 is located across the road from the old parsonage, and has a low Vibracrete boundary wall, which can be washed with a high-pressure jet hose. The Gutters and down pipes are made of plastic, which indicates that this house is newer than the ones surrounding it. At the moment, it is unoccupied. The interior ceilings are quite badly damaged, which indicates holes in the roof sheeting outside. There is rust damage on the metal pipe fittings in the bathroom and the kitchen, with extensive damage to the kitchen sink. This, however, indicates that there is running water in this house.

There is quite a large garden on the east side of the house, accessible through the back door of the kitchen. There are aloe trees next to the north-facing boundary wall, and care should be taken to leave them there. There are, however, a lot of invasive brown/yellow weeds in the garden that should ideally be removed.

There is a braai place on the west-facing boundary wall, as well as two small rooms, possibly used as a laundry or servants' quarters, as there are tins sinks in the left-hand room. There are pigeons nesting in both of these outhouses. There is a washing line outside, and three asbestos water tanks in the garden.

#### **House # 35, Church street**

House 35 is currently being inhabited by an ex- political prisoner. There is a rose-coloured granite fireplace and mantle, which has not been used in years, and may or may not be still functional. The rose-coloured mantle is a good indication that these houses were built around WWII, as this type of interior decor was popular.

The kitchen floor has been covered with linoleum, which has now cracked and chipped. The plaster in the laundry at the back (west-facing side) of the house is badly peeling. There is a large crack in the doorway leading from the front room (lounge) to the passage, visible on both sides of the doorway, which may be caused by the leaking roof in the lounge. The crack on both sides of the doorway indicates structural damage. Some of the exterior gutters are broken. There are servants' quarters semi-detached from the house, that are currently being lived in by Robben Island staff.

#### **House # 36, Church street**

House 36 has the same rose-coloured granite fireplace as its neighbour, indicating that these two houses were built at the same time. The roof here, too, leaks. There are semi-detached servants' quarters in this house too, as well as a washing line and asbestos water tank. Unlike its neighbour, house 36 has an outside hot water boiler, possibly wood- or coal-fired. This house has asbestos roofing.

#### **House #37, Church Street**

This house is the same size and shape as houses 35 and 36. Like the others, there are leaks in the ceiling, most notably the ceiling of the pantry and bedroom. However, unlike house 35 and 36, this

house's boundary walls are not made of Malmsbury shale. Like houses 35 and 36, this house has asbestos roof sheeting.

### **Houses 35, 36, 37**

Examining houses 35, 36, and 37 together, it is noticed that the east-facing window frames are made out of wood, whilst the two window frames on the south-east corners of the houses are made out of metal. These metal-framed windows and front door make up a small room that was once an outside balcony, explaining the difference in window frames. The floor plans to houses 35, 36, and 37 are all very similar, indicating that all three of these houses were built at the same time.

The east-facing boundary walls of houses 35, 36, and 37 are all the same height, and made out of Malmsbury shale. Evenly-spaced pockmarks on the tops of these walls indicate that a metal fence might have been added to the top of these walls, and later taken down. There are no walls separating these houses from each other, but instead chain-link fences are used to demarcate the boundaries between the houses. This fencing is starting to fall down, and may need to be replaced or removed.

Phase one of this project should be finished in early February, in time for the governing body to inspect the island.